



**SOLID
BREAD**

JUDE: “The Acts of the Apostates”

Week 5: “A Spotlight on False Teachers”

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Review:

- A. Through our first four weeks in our study of Jude, we’ve gained a broad introduction to this tiny New Testament book.
- B. We’ve also zeroed in on the phrase in **vs. 3**, “*the salvation we share.*” We’ve spent the past two lessons better understanding the Gospel of Jesus Christ: what it is, and what it is not.
- C. We’ve seen in these first few lessons that Jude’s purpose and God’s purpose needed to find alignment as this book was divinely authored. Jude’s purpose began one way, and it changed to become another (**vs. 3**).
- D. If there is a takeaway here, it’s this: God needed the willing and service-ready heart of Jude to be fully yielded to the Holy Spirit.
- E. It was only in such a place that Jude could be guided into accomplishing something greater than his own plans.
 1. And so, it is true with us, our best intentions may not always be God’s intentions!
 2. Jude confesses he wanted to write about our salvation, and some key elements of the Gospel, but the Holy Spirit had very different plans.
 3. We need to be sensitive to a key application here. It is possible to appear Christ-led in others’ eyes, but not really be led.
 4. It’s possible to teach on themes that seem timely, to develop a vision that seems sound, to embark on a ministry that seems centered in the Word of God - but entirely miss what God most desires us to do!

NOTE: I ended our last lesson in Jude by stating that we are going to put a spotlight on false teachers today. We are going to unpack four key defining elements of these false teachers. (**read vs. 4**).

I. The Source of False Teachers

- A. **First**, they were not unknown individuals.
 1. Others had provided warnings about these kinds of people before.
 - a. (**Cf. Galatians 2:4**) - written between 49-55 AD, perhaps some 15-20 years earlier.
 - b. Paul writes, “*This matter arose because some false believers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves.*”
 - c. Here in **Galatians**, Paul warns that the objective of these false believers was to reinforce legalism and deflect attention from the work of Christ.
 - d. (**Cf. Romans 16:17**) – This was written 57-58 AD.
 - e. As Paul is signing off Romans, he writes, “*I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.*”

- f. Again, Paul urges caution here. He warns against those who taught what was contrary to his own instructions they introduce 'divisions and obstacles'.
 2. Jude does the same thing here in **vs. 4**. As Jude assumes his readers are '*dearly beloved*' (in other words, true believers) in **vs. 3**, so he rightly assumes that his readers are not unfamiliar with the matter and the habits of false teachers.
 3. These sorts of people are not unfamiliar, they are known individuals.
- B. **Second**, they enter a body of believers through two means:
1. First, they come in by themselves secretly (**Cf. again, Galatians 2:4**).
 - a. Spies do not send a herald ahead of them proclaiming their arrival.
 - b. Instead, they do whatever they can to keep a low profile, and to go unnoticed.
 - c. Their ambition is to influence by means of infiltrating and by being innocuous.
 - d. They evolve in their role and in their influence through conventional means.
 4. There is a second way they enter a body of believers, and here, they are brought in publicly by others (**Cf. 2 Timothy 4:2-4**): **emphasis vss. 3&4** – NOTE: Here is a very different source of false teachers; a very visible and apparent means for false teachers to enter a church is defined in this passage:
 - a. Unlike the quiet spies whose ambitions are their own, these latter folk come in through the ambitions of others.
 - b. Unlike the infiltrators who gradually sneak their way in, this second group comes in through the front door with a lot of fanfare.
 - c. Unlike the undercover agents who try to coax congregants away from the truth, here the congregants themselves have already turned away from the truth.
 - d. Here a body of believers has already corporately rejected what is most important to their spiritual welfare. The result is they desire to reinforce their own ideas and passions.
 - e. Unlike the secret agents who do their best work alone, this second group of false teachers need allies and reinforcements to accomplish their intentions.
 - f. They come into their role without proper gifting, without the responsible treatment of God's Word, and without the proper goals and calling.
 - g. These differing analogies could continue, but in both cases, the effect is much the same:
 - Sound and deep teaching is replaced with theological drift.
 - Individual desires and cultural expectations get placed on the same pedestal with inspired doctrine.
 - Enduring truth yields to shallow themes of passing novelty and myth.
 - Eventually, the socially-acceptable message of 'goodness' become more important than the socially-unacceptable message of "Godliness."

NOTE: These details comprise **the source of false teachers**. Now, let's move on to the next major point that puts a spotlight on these dangerous teachers.

II. The Subtlety of False Teachers

NOTE: (Let's go back to **Jude 4**) – The focus will be upon the implications of two phrases here: “secretly slipped in” and “among you.”

A. First, they secretly slip in (The focus here is not so much the method as it is the motive). It's not about 'how' they do it, but 'why' they do it.

1. What is already apparent to us is the basic agenda of false teachers is to dilute sound teaching. That's obvious in **Jude**, as well as the passages we read in **Galatians, 2 Timothy**, and **Romans**.
2. We also need to understand the intention of false teachers is to destroy the flock. Now, they may not be consciously thinking, “I want to destroy this body of believers,” but they may be thinking instead:
 - a. “I want to change things here.”
 - b. They may be thinking, “I want to be more culturally relevant.”
 - c. Or perhaps they are thinking, “I want to focus on certain things and themes from the Bible and not on others.” Putting that another way, they deliberately dilute the full counsel of God's Word.
 - d. The net effect is the same in each case. A destructive element will enter into a body of believers.
3. (**Cf. Matthew 7:15**) - “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.”

NOTE: What about the word ‘prophets’ used here. Is this a different issue altogether?

4. TWO POINTS NEED TO BE MADE HERE, and they both are words that begin with “F:”
 - a. **FINALITY:** Recall, **Jude 3** speaks of “the faith which was once entrusted to the saints.”
 - The faith to which we hold has been settled forever. It's a ‘done deal’ as it is.
 - It does not need the addition of extra-biblical revelation, it does not need to be wrapped in culturally appropriate terms or methods, and it should never be diluted or handled so as to not offend sinners.
 - b. **FURTHERANCE:** The Bible teaches that there is a transition from ‘prophet’ to ‘teacher.’ That is to say, prophets in the Old Testament sense once had a role, but the emphasis is now on teaching.
 - (**Cf. 2 Peter 2:1**) – “But there were also false prophets in Israel, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves.”
 - The Old Testament era had its prophets; the church today has its pastors and teachers.
 - Prophecy, which means receiving **new revelations** from God which are to be proclaimed to others, ceased with the completion of the Bible, the divinely inspired Word of God.

- This is the key reason we should avoid those who claim to be ‘prophets’ in today’s times. Many (most) of these people wrongly attempt to place their own utterances on the same playing field as Scripture.
- c. So, we can now understand **Matthew 7:15** better in the perspective of ‘false teachers.’ (NOTE: Plenty of misled people follow ‘false teachers’ who also are self-declared ‘prophets’ in the sense of new revelation. These are easy to spot.)
- 5. However, the picture of a ‘*wolf in sheep’s clothing*’ is a much more dangerous assessment. It is not a humorous picture, but a very serious one.
- 6. The idea emphasized in **Matthew 7:15** is these people have every appearance of being a real sheep. They even deceive the sheep that they are among.
 - a. But inwardly, they are very different.
 - b. Consequently, they are very dangerous to the welfare of the sheep because they really do not have the priorities, the needs, and the welfare of the sheep in mind.
 - c. Deep inside themselves, they are infected with some sort of self-ambition. As a result, they have other goals in mind.
 - d. They would argue with this, but they do have an agenda that is inconsistent with God’s agenda.
 - e. As we learned from the description of the Laodicean church in **Revelation Ch. 3**, they are deluded. They believe things about themselves that are not true.
 - f. This is why **Acts 20:29** calls them ‘ravenous or savage.’ The writer, Luke, says in this passage, “*I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock.*”
 - g. A more amplified study of **Acts 20:29** shows that these false teachers are starving for self-gratification and personal ambition.
 - h. Because they are all about themselves, they will use and abuse the sheep in order to achieve their own goals.
 - i. Therefore, they secretly get in amongst the flock in a way that does not alarm the sheep!
 - j. There are no stampedes here. There is no corporate pushback. Any sort of mass reaction against these false teachers and against their methods is to be avoided at all costs.
 - k. We are given the tools to see them for what they are. In the two verses following **Matthew 7:15**, we are reminded that, “*You shall know them by their fruits....*”
 - l. According to **Matthew** they can be spotted! While outwardly they appear legitimate, we can know them by their fruits.
 - m. Bottom line: We are to judge or evaluate these individuals by their actions, by their words, by their choices, by their response to sound Bible doctrine, by their results, and by their consequences. These things are: “*their fruits.*”

NOTE: This is all commentary on the phrase from **Jude 4** that they have “*secretly slipped in.*” Now, let’s look at the next phase concerning **the subtlety of false teachers**, and that they are “*among you.*”

- B. **(They are) among you:** The threat may not be from the outside, but instead from the inside. (The lesson here is we need to worry less about the ‘big bad world’ and more about the ‘big bad wolf.’) **NOTE:** Here are some comments about these people being “*among you.*”
1. Number one, they seek to fill a vacuum of leadership. **Acts 20:29** tells us:
 - a. Luke says ‘*after I leave*’ – The problem comes when good and Godly leadership is absent, it’s when solid doctrine is not given priority, and it’s when other lesser agendas are lifted up. This is when false teachers see an opportunity
 - b. Again, staying with what **Acts 20:29** says, they sometimes enter from the outside (**vs. 29** – ‘*come in*’) or they can arise from within the body of believers as **Jude 4** may suggest.
 - c. In **Acts 20:30**, the very next verse states: “*even from your own number men will arise...*”
 - d. A very real source of ‘wolves’ comes from within a body of believers.

NOTE: I’ve been around the church for a long time. I’ve seen both dynamics at play.

I’ve seen new pastors come in from the outside and badly steer a body of believers wrongly. I’ve seen this almost result in church splits.

I’ve also seen men without proper gifting or without proper respect for God’s Word placed into positions of leadership from within a church. They TOO steer the church wrong. Both can happen.

2. But again(!) - - their individual goals are inconsistent with God’s Word (**back to Acts 20:29**). And that is why this verse says they will not ‘*spare the flock.*’
 - a. **Question:** “How do we understand this matter of not sparing the flock?”
 - b. **Simplest answer:** They do not place the needs of the sheep over their own personal agenda.
 - c. This is not what a responsible shepherd does. A good shepherd cares for his sheep.
 - d. False teachers do not care for the sheep, and so, as a result, they do not ‘*spare the flock.*’
3. The goals of these false teachers are achieved two ways according to **Acts 20:30**:
#1: They “*distort the truth.*”

NOTE: A clear declaration of the plain and simple truth of the scriptures is always a corrective agent to error.

 - a. **IMPORTANT:** Doctrinal drift is a first cousin to personal ambition, and vice versa.
 - b. These two problems need each other. This is why ‘apostasy’ is always a mark of a sliding church.

- c. Where truth is present, God is lifted up. His glory is preeminent. His truth is proclaimed.
- d. Conversely, whenever personal a agenda is lifted up, truth is suppressed. Mans' attention is more important, or it is more important than it *should be*. Truth is diluted and replaced with culturally appropriate methods.
- e. So, the first goal of these false teachers is achieved by "*distorting the truth.*"
- 4. #2, (They) "draw away disciples after them."
 - NOTE: I've seen this happen too. False teachers need to gather their own supporters.
 - a. Like a fire, they consume a population, and they create division as they seek to acquire their own followers and supporters.
 - b. Here, the term "disciples" is used – these are best thought of as people who will propagate their leader's agenda.
 - c. This shallow crowd buys into the latest campaign, program, or agenda. They take their cues from these false teachers, and they start to say the same things their leaders are saying.
 - d. I've seen entire churches reset their sails to conform and perform to the short-sighted and self-centered goals of their leadership.
 - e. In essence and in function, they became 'disciples' of these false teachers.

III. The Strategy of False Teachers -

NOTE: Their goal, or in this case, their 'strategy,' is achieved two ways. (Acts 20:30):

- A. I want to go back to the phrase, "*they distort the truth.*"
 - 1. As I mentioned before, a clear declaration of the plain and truth of the Scriptures is always a corrective agent to error. I also stated, doctrinal drift is a first cousin to personal ambition.
 - a. This is why 'apostasy' – which as we've learned is a 'departure from truth,' is nearly always a mark of a sliding church.
 - According to **Acts 20:30**, this is intentional misdirection. It's not a casual oversight. Wolves do not accidentally appear!
 - (Hear me carefully): Where Biblical accountability is valued: the perfect and complete Word of God will be lifted up.
 - Where Biblical accountability is valued: God's glory will be pursued.
 - Where Biblical accountability is valued: a literal interpretation of the Scriptures will be emphasized.
 - Where Biblical accountability is valued: the hard and tough truths of Scripture will be taught alongside the 'easy stuff.'
 - Where Biblical accountability is valued: the Gospel will be properly taught.
 - Where Biblical accountability is valued: a protective and intentional hedge will be placed against the invasion of wolves.

NOTE: Conversely, where personal agenda is valued, and where wolves can find opportunity, truth must be distorted. This is the point of **Acts 20:30**.

Truth gets distorted in a body of believers in essentially two ways according to 2 Timothy 4:3-4:

“For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.”

So - - what are the two ways truth gets distorted? (Here are two “S” words to help us remember):

2. First, truth is suppressed

- a. Whatever truth is uncomfortable or inconvenient is not taught.
- b. Whatever truth holds folks accountable will be ignored.
- c. Whatever truth crosses the grain of political correctness will be leap-frogged.
- d. Whatever truth forces people to change what they most want to believe about themselves will be sidestepped.
- e. I could continue here, but this is what is meant by “...men will not put up with sound doctrine.” They simply will not tolerate the truth!

3. There is also a second way truth is distorted and that is this: truth is supplemented.

- a. Whatever is easier to teach or is convenient or current with the times we live in is emphasized instead. This is what is meant by the phrase “to hear what their itching ears want to hear.”
- b. Whatever is self-serving or culturally-acceptable in some fashion is given priority. This approach emphasizes ‘myth over truth.’ **What are some examples?**
 - Sin, according to the Bible, is simply an ‘alternative lifestyle.’
 - The church is best understood to be a place of conversation, or friendship, rather than an organization ordained by Christ and accountable to Christ.
 - The church should seek to ATTRACT the unsaved on the outside rather than EQUIP and EDIFY the saved on the inside.
 - Good works and community or social activism are more important than deep and solid teaching.
 - There is the belief that government mandates should be followed, even when these things conflict with Scripture.
 - Lastly, any belief that theology is relative and should adapt with the changing times (These are just some examples of how truth is supplemented).
- c. The second strategy of false teachers is something we mentioned a bit ago, but now I want to dive in a little deeper. The strategy is this, (they) “draw away disciples after them.”
- d. False teachers are like false Presidents. They need deception and underhanded tactics to achieve their means. They need to gather supporters that are willing to ‘play the game.’ In the church, these supporters are seen in concentric layers.

- e. First, there are the decision-makers which decide they want the false teachers in the first place.
 - They are the folks that are most loyal ‘to the cause.’ **2 Timothy 4:3-4** clarifies that the strongest supporters of the false teachers are those which have ‘gathered them’ in the first place.
 - They have a ‘dog in the hunt’ here. They have something to gain by standing behind these false teachers and keeping a body of believers in a shallow spot.
 - This circle of folks will often act very protectively of a false teacher.
- f. Division then comes about as the false teachers seek close followers or “disciples” (**Cf. Acts 20:30**). These are other people who will propagate the false teacher’s agenda. This is the next layer out.
 - NOTE: Consider the phrase ‘draw away.’ This layer of folks, these disciples, were pulled away from one commitment and persuaded to be part of another.
 - It’s like Jesus calling Peter away from his nets to ‘...follow me and I will make you a fisher of men.’ Jesus pulled Peter away from one commitment and Peter became part of another.
 - A disciple here is, at least, one who seeks to imitate and strongly support another, even if it means abandoning truth and better principles. This happens all the time in churches.

NOTE: One thing I have seen as a constant with false teachers is they seek popularity or to be well-liked.

This is implied in **Acts 20:29** where Paul warns false teachers will come in to draw away disciples ‘**after them.**’ Always, the goals and agendas are self-serving. It is about them!

- g. They are often successful. **2 Peter 2:2** says:

“Many will follow in their depravity, and because of them the way of truth will be defamed.”

- h. Recall that **Jude** and **2 Peter** are very similar in theme and intent.
 - Other translations say “...many will follow their shameful (or ‘destructive’) ways...”
 - Here’s a reality check: False teachers may indeed be popular, especially among certain people.
 - However, just because something or someone attracts a crowd or grows in number, it does not mean that it’s of God. It’s not like business where numbers tell the real story!
 - God’s Word always bears fruit. **Isaiah 55:11** says:

“so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”

- It is also true that the devil's work can also increase, while appearing to be the Lord's work done by Godly men.
 - **2 Corinthians 11:13-15** mentions '*false apostles masquerading as apostles of Christ,*' and "*Satan masquerading as an angel of light.*" Success by man's standards can happen here as well. **NOTE: This should 'not surprise' us.**
- i. Keep in mind, any popularity of false teachers and their success is to the demise of truth.
- When false teachers are at work and when crowds are following them: the **way of truth** is brought into **disrepute**.
 - Because truth should not be blended with novelty, and because truth should not be subordinated to cultural or personal ambition, inevitably God's holy name and His honor are disgraced when handled by the motives of a false prophet.